A MIDNIGHT RACE

B. P. SHILLABER

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PRESS OF
ROCKWELL AND CHURCHILL
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OLD COLONY HILL.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

SKETCHED FROM NATURE BY F. MYRICK.

QUINCY STATION.

QUINCY BRIDGE.

"THE POINT PROPOSED."

CUSHING HOUSE.

OLD COLONY HILL.

THE FINISH.

THE WHITE HORSE ASLEEP.
Ears and Tail down.

THE WHITE HORSE AWAKE.
Surprise Number One.

"A PHANTOM FIGURE."
Surprise Number Two.

NO STOP FOR REFRESHMENTS.

"JERUSALEM, MY HAPPY HOME."

TRIUMPH!
Ears and Tail up.

A MIDNIGHT RACE.

BY B. P. SHILLABER.

THOSE who reside at Jerusalem,
Among suburban towns a gem
In Boston's regal crown,
Sometimes, through politics or fun
Or other cause, when day is done,
No matter what, the fleet hours run
And they're delayed in town,
Until they every muscle strain
With eager, business-crowded brain
To catch the latest Quincy train
Which is to take them down.

Now this same fate to four befell
(Once on a time, as we've "heard tell").
Banking, or Law, or Real Estate
Had wearied them with pressure great,
For whom the quick day wouldn't wait,

QUINCY STATION.

And so prolonged their stay till late,
Away from home's delights;
Took Moore's advice, who wisely says
The very best way to lengthen our days
Is to take a slice from our nights.

But well the loitering Brahmin knew
There waited him, at Quincy, two
Of the finest steeds that ever flew
O'er country roads, that would put them through;
So when, at ten, they lighted
At Quincy station, there they found
The prancing span that pawed the ground
And neighed with most impatient sound,
To greet the ones benighted,
With a fine wagon, light and trim,
Over the South Shore roads to skim;
And as the Brahmin and those with him
Stepped into the team by the station's glim
They felt delay requited.

And there beyond was another team,
Seen by the same light's steady gleam,
That any one with a horse might deem
The ghost of an ancient steed,
Of ghastly superhuman white,
With drooping head, as if the light
Were painful to his dimming sight,
Which might for pity plead;
Long for usefulness given o'er,
His hold to life frail tenure wore,

A MIDNIGHT RACE.

A charger gone to seed.
To the horse was hitched an ancient dray
As frail as the Deacon's one-hoss shay
On the morn of Lisbon's earthquake day,
With a harness of rusty leather,
Which looked as though, in a primitive way,
It had served in Governor Carver's day,
And to keep it from falling all astray
It was tied with thongs together.

And then a voice came out of the dark
That none but the driver's ear could hark;
"Those coursers must be beaten, mark,
If it costs a hundred dollars."
"Aye, aye, sir," was whispered back again.
Away went the thousand-dollar twain,
With Archie holding the bridle rein.
The old horse started to life again,
And dashed ahead at a lively strain,
Leaving it at the outset plain
He wasn't a horse that "follars."

Through Quincy town, o'er Quincy bridge,
They cleft the darkness like a wedge,
And the curiosity set on edge,
Of people of quiet bent,
Who peered out into the night to see
What the cause of the rush might be,
If the witches were back to Old Colony,
Or what the deuce it meant.

QUINCY BRIDGE.

On went the mysterious flight,
The old horse with his coat of white
Making a mark on the slate of night,
Like thing of ghostly dread.
And Archie plied the vigorous thong,
To urge the thoroughbreds along,
And they showed their mettle fleet and strong,
But the white was still ahead.

"This is a *dark case*," Blackstone cried,
Holding in place his jellying hide,
His lofty brow of margin wide,
Feeling the air that rushed like a tide;
"A *quo warranto* should this matter decide,
And secure a *stay of proceeding;*
But, my dear Brahmin, *inter nos*,
This race *in re* mayn't be *in pos.*,
For us it threatens to be a loss
Through that infernal old white hoss
That our advance is leading.
De jure, we the race have won,
'Gainst such a monstrous beast to run,
But yet, *de facto*, 'tisn't done,
And we shall have to stand the fun
Spite of all our *special pleading.*"

"Wait," said the Brahmin, "yonder hill
Will give the blasted beast his fill.
Archie, now put in with a will,
Keep right close to his heels."

THE POINT PROPOSED.

Uphill and downhill then they tore,
Such speed had ne'er been known before,
Along that favored southern shore,
As record ne'er reveals.
"Give 'em the whip," the Brahmin cried,
But all in vain the string he plied,
He couldn't urge the span beside
The shaky wagon wheels.

But when diverging roads they reach,
One leading down to Downer's beach,
The Brahmin, with exultant speech,
"We'll go by then," he said,
"And we will into Hingham go
(Lay on the whip and prove it so),
At least ten rods ahead."

Then on they dashed through thick and thin,
Waking strange echoes by their din,
In hope the distant goal to win.
The stars looked down with a seeming grin,
The stirring scene to share.
When as they neared the "point proposed,"
A phantom figure was disclosed,
And like our "flag," as sung and prosed,
The old white horse was "there."

They kept right on as at the start,
The heads of the span o'er the tail of the cart,
The latter creaking in every part,
The road before them a hidden chart,

CUSHING HOUSE.

On through the darkness pushing,
Until burst on their path a light,
And a crowd of gazers came in sight
(Who'd got a hint of the wondrous flight),
In front of Hotel de Cushing,
As the sightly team and the rattle trap,
With the Brahmin and Blackstone and t'other chap,
Went by the hotel rushing.

They sped away o'er Colony Hill,
The ghostly whitey leading still,
Down through the swamp, with ardent will,
Down where the salamanders dwell,
Down 'mong the summering squatters;
"They've bought that horse," the Brahmin said,
As he wiped the night dew from his head,
"And we are left, our courage fled,
Like clay in the hands of the potters."

Now they had reached the old thatched gate,
The white horse stood their coming to wait,
Who held up his head as if elate,
That he'd led the span in contest straight
Full thirty-five minutes from starting.
Then the Brahmin smiled and glumly said,
"If the brothers had driven *their* plugs instead
Of that old frame that is almost dead,
'Twould have had a better imparting."

Now all can see, as is often shown,
Where wills are threatened and overthrown,

THE FINISH.

That "undue influence" alone
Could prompt to their preparing.
And here the hundred-dollar fee
Prompted the nag's cupidity;
For in those who neither feel nor see
The dollars' chink awakes *esprit*,
Which makes all possible to be,
And the nag, this feeling sharing,
Responded to the magic tone
Of stimulus round money thrown,
And went it with full hand alone
As those in euchre daring.

And thus the race should not be claimed
For the old steed, spavined, blind, and lamed;
The good steeds, in their status famed,
For no vile failure should be blamed
Like this we've given place;
But still the cunning ones will chaff
And at the striking statement laugh,
That an old nag, dead more than half,
Should have won the midnight race.

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